There is no force to check us, for an hour, to the northward. There will we *all* take ship for Flanders, and tarry there in peace till better days return for hapless England. Here be provisions, wine, and lights, and money. Say, liegeman, will you do my bidding?"

"I were a traitor else."

"And instantly? Our horses are already saddling! The Lady of Barden Tower will take horse ere sunset!"

"For Carlisle and for Flanders?"

"What? Do you doubt *me?* For Carlisle and Flanders."

"And, Eleanor, when we be safe in Flanders?"

"Then, Amelot, you must ask—"

"Whom?"

"Whom—if you are obedient—but *your* Eleanor?"

"I *am* obedient."

One more brief embrace, and he raised her light burthen to her saddle; and, eager to prove his obedience and good faith, disappeared behind the cataract, and plunged fearlessly into the abysses of those limestone caverns, which, undermining all that region, conduits of subterranean rivers, would lead him, miles away, to the cove of Malham.

Had he remained one minute longer, he had lingered until it was too late—for had he dreamed the peril she had yet to run, he had died before he had turned on his heel, or he had not deserved to win her.

She had just reached the Strid, when the bancloche of Barden Tower pealed forth its battle summons, and, casting her eyes down the gorge between herself and the ascent to the castle, she saw a band of archery and spears hurrying up the pass, led by the traitor Damian.

A wooded corner of the rock below, and the steep elevation on which she stood, concealed her from them for the moment. Another minute, and she would be in the hands of those who spared nor sex, nor age, least of all beauty—herself and him also!

There was no passage up the glen; on this side no concealment. The thought flashed on her, like the electric fluid. Across "the Strid" is honor—life—love!

That was a brave thought for a brave man's mind. What then for a frail girl's—a girl's whose ancestor had perished in those black whirling waters?

She paused not to think twice. With a bright eye, but cheek and lip white as ashes, whispering one soft prayer to God, she turned her horse's head, faced him at the dread pass, and with light curb and well-plied lash, charged him right at it.

Fiery and fresh, he reared bolt upright as he felt the lash; and, ignorant of what lay in his path, charged over the black slippery rocks right onward.

His hoofs were on the very brink, when he perceived the hideous whirl of the black torrent; then he would have sheered or paused—when sheer or pause had been instant death—but it was all too late; for with a steady bridle hand she rose him at it, and brought down the lash on his croupe with such a will of that slight arm that the thong left a bloody score.

He sprang—his feet clanged twice upon the rocks, drowned by the roar of the river, and the clash of the bancloche, and he and his fair rider were in shelter of the deep woodland, just as the band of Yorkists, scaling the heights, stood upon the plateau, where *they* stood not a point of time before.

Ill went it with that band of Yorkists; worse with the traitor Damian. For, ere the gentle Eleanor, faint with the peril which now first she apprehended, had scaled the opposing bank and won the open moorland, down from the keep of Barden, with bill, and bow, and bugle-blast and battle cry, poured in treble force the vassals of her house.

"Lancaster, Egremont for Lancaster! and give no quarter!"

Within ten minutes it was over; pent in that gorge where they could neither fight nor fly, they were cut down like sheep, until not one remained to tell the tale of horror.

Damian alone they took alive; and him, in the rage and vengeance of the moment, for they believed themselves too late to save their mistress, they flung headlong into the awful chasm, o'er which she had just passed in safety.

One wild cry—and no human eye again beheld him—no human ear again heard of him.

But, ere the executioners returned in gory triumph home, borne like the wind by her good steed, she had descended to the abbey bridge, recrossed the brineful Wharfe, and was already weeping on her mother's bosom.

But her trials all were ended, and thence her joys began. Carlisle, Flanders, were gained in safety; and when, in the good town of Antwerp, Amelot asked his Eleanor, she said not nay! to Amelot.

Some years they lived in exile, but neither poor nor unhonored; for those were days in which the stout hand and true heart gained the wealth and fame which now fall to the lot of peddler craft and greed.

But when the Count of Richmond won England's crown on bloody Bosworth, Sir Amelot de Manhower stood beside him; and, ere he sat on his throne at Westminster, fair Eleanor sat, happy wife, and happy mistress, in the halls of Barden.

Nor, though the keep is now one rifted tower, the abbey but a roofless pile, have the country folk forgotten the tale which gained the fearful "Strid" its more romantic name, "The Lady's Leap."

THE LADY'S LEAP.

A LEGEND OF THE WARS OF THE ROSES.

BY HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT, AUTHOR OF "THE ROMAN TRAITOR," "MARMADUKE WYVIL," "CROMWELL," "THE BROTHERS," ETC. ETC.

EVEN at this day, one of the wildest and most purely pastoral districts in all England is that region of the West Riding of Yorkshire which lies between Lancashire on the south and west, and a part of Westmoreland on the north, and which is divided on the east, from the more populous portions of the fine county to which it belongs, by the waters of the great northern river Ure, destined, after twice changing its name, and swallowing up tributaries mightier than itself, to fall into the North Sea as the Husuler. To this day, in the whole of that large tract, there is no large town; nothing, indeed, that we should dignify, in the United States, by the title of a considerable village.

It abounds, however, in the most splendid scenery; it contains some of the loftiest hills, as Ingleborough, Whernside, and Pensingant, and is watered by the loveliest rivers, the Nid, the Wharfe, the Eyre, and many a tributary torrent, in all the sea-girt island. Emphatically, it is a land of hills and dales, or, as they are termed in the north country dialect, the fells and the ghylls. The population sparse, simple, hospitable, and contented, are scattered, through the narrow vales which intersect the huge round-topped heathery ridges, in hamlets small, indeed, but picturesque and happy, earning enough to supply their few and trivial wants by cultivating the narrow verge of soft green meadow land, which everywhere forms the bottom of the ghylls, and pasturing their flocks and herds, of moorland sheep and kyloes, upon the heath-clad hills, on which each farm possesses a free commonage.

In the times, however, of the wars of the Roses, during the fatal strife of the kindred houses of York and Lancaster, which constitute the cruelest and bloodiest page of Britain's history, the Ghyllsland was a purely pastoral, a purely feudal region.

The great Earl of Warwick, from his Castle of Middleham, a little way to the eastward on the waters of the Ure, the Prior of Bolton Abbey on the Wharfe, and the Egremonts of Barden Tower, were all the great proprietors throughout that rugged country; and so lightly did the feudal rule of the good monks and popular nobles press on their vassals, that they might be called the freest population in all England: a few simple quit-rents of the produce of their farms, a few days of man-service when their lords waged war on the wild beasts, which were then plentiful in the forest, or on one other in the field of civil strife, constituted the whole of their duties; and these, in those dark and bloody days, were looked upon almost as privileges. Every dales man was in those days an archer, and, as such, a huntsman and a soldier; and, to have been debarred from following his lord's hounds on the fell, his lord's banner on the field, he would have looked upon not as a privilege, but as a penalty and a disgrace.

The bloody field of Towton had been fought about ten days, and the whole north of England was filled with terror, lamentation, and despair. Some forty thousand men had fallen, in their harness, on that field of "gentle blood," after which a baron of the old Norman blood was more rarely to be seen for half a century in England, as the old saying ran, than a wolf or a wild boar.

Nor had the Ghyllsmen escaped their share of the slaughter; nor were their humble homes exempt from the desolation, which smote yet more heavily the towers of their feudal liege lords.

That country, like the rest of England, had been divided in some sort against itself; for the men of the eastern fells had followed the Bear and Ragged staff of Warwick, the great king-maker, to bloody triumph; the westlanders had marched to horrible defeat for the ill-fated cause of Lancaster, under the Prior of Bolton's bailiffs and the Lady of Barden's seneschal.

The days of chivalry were passed; the spirit of chivalry had died out, choked by the fiercer fire of intestine warfare. Edward, the Burgher King, as his enemies were wont to call him, although a leader in the field and a soldier in the *mêlée*, had little of the cavalier, less of the gentle knight, in his iron composition. None knew more stoutly how to fight, more kingly how to conquer. None knew more bloodily, more brutally, how to gather in the fruits of victory. No veneration of old age, no pity of green youth, no tenderness for sex, no respect for valor, ever once moved his heart of steel to remit the bloody sentence of *va victis*. To be a captive enemy was to be butchered summarily upon the field, or reserved yet more pitilessly for the scaffold.

No wonder, then, if, between mourning for their dead and trembling for their living, the fugitive Lancastrians shuddered in their wild ghylls at every blast of wind that whistled through their mountain gorges, magnified by their fears into the fatal clangor of the Yorkist trumpet.

The vassals, it is true, were suffered, unless taken under arms red-handed, to escape the penalty of their faith to their feudal lords; since loyalty of that

nature both sides alike desired to promote, and neither dared in policy to punish. The cottage, therefore, oftentimes afforded to the lowly peasant that shelter which the abbey could not yield to its revered prior, nor the Norman castle to its haughty noble.

It was the tenth night after that terrible defeat, and the Lady of Barden Tower sat lonely by the dim embers and dull lamplight of her mournful hall; now striving to draw consolation from the pages of her illuminated missal, now listening gloomily to the fierce gusts of the autumn wind, as it roared and wailed about her turrets; to the incessant pelting of the storm upon the roofs; to the wild raving of the tortured Wharfe, as, flooded by the torrents from the hills, it chafed and howled among the rocks, which pent up its maddened waters in the dale below. Almost she fancied now that she could hear the war cries and the trumpets, the pattering arrow flights on mail shirt and steel helmet, the cries and curses of the desperate and the dying, in the voices of the winter tempest.

Her tenants had returned home unmolested; their dead had been laid in holy earth, within the abbey precincts, in the lower glen. Herself she had seen their dust consigned to dust, their ashes unto ashes; herself she had given tears to their dead from those stern eyes, which refused to weep when her own lord fell under shield, as the phrase ran, full knightly; herself she had consoled their widows with her sympathy, and salved their wounds with gold; and now she sat alone, as I have said, disconsolate, almost despairing, in the gloom of her widowed hall.

Yet she feared nothing, thought of nothing touching her own losses, her own sorrows, her own safety; save as her people, decimated by the sword of York, were sorrowing; save as her trustiest knights were hunted by the hounds of Warwick; save as her king was again an exile afar from the land of his fathers; save as her own and only daughter was imperiled by her loyalty. For, though her vassals had returned, the gray-haired seneschal who led them to the field, and who had fought beside her husband's rein in Guienne and Poitou, was yet a fugitive, wounded and weak, as tidings had already reached her, not daring to return to his own home, whither most certainly he should be hunted—for the good knight who bore her banner, Sir Amelot de Manhower, was in like plight, and only bade her trust that banner to his keeping, for it was bound about his breast, till brighter days should come, and it should fly again for Egremont and Lancaster—for she had one fair daughter, the flower of all the dales; and even now she shuddered, as she thought how the bloody and licentious Edward might wreak his vengeance on herself, upon that innocent and lovely child. She shuddered, but she shrank not for one instant from her fealty; nor hesitated, even in her inmost heart, from battling yet again for Lancaster, so soon as Henry's banner should be spread again to British breezes.

While thus she sat, her tall and stately figure clad in the darkest weeds, bending above the pictured missal, her snow-white locks straying disheveled over her neck and shoulders, her dark eyes fixed on vacancy, a light and joyous step came bounding down the stone turret stairway, and paused for a moment at the door, as if in doubt whether it might enter.

But the lady heard not, heeded not, till a fluttering hand turned the ponderous lock, and the fleet foot crossed the threshold with a step so lightsome, as told sure tidings of a happy heart inspiring it.

It was as beautiful a girl as ever cheered a widowed mother's solitude, not past her eighteenth summer, and looking yet more youthful than she was, from the extreme brilliancy and brightness of her pure complexion, the sunny loveliness of her long golden tresses, and the expression of exquisite innocence and candor which lighted up her large azure eyes. The Lady of Barden raised her eyes and fixed them fondly on her child, and a mournful smile played over her pallid features as she looked upon her, joyous still and radiant in the midst of peril and dismay.

"Ever gay, ever joyous, Eleanor," she said, with a half reproachful gesture of the head; "and what can you find, in these dark and dreadful days, to light up that merry beacon in your eye, to kindle that gay smile upon your lip? But, youth! youth! It is still the part of youth to hope, as it is of age, sad age, to despair."

"Nay, mother dear," said the girl, in a whisper, when she stood close beside the lady's footstool, having closed the door carefully behind her; "but there is cause of joy now; yes, great cause of joy; for he has returned, and safely, too, or, at least, not badly wounded, and is hard by, looking to us, as well he may, for succor."

"Who has returned? Whom do you mean, Eleanor?"

"Whom do I mean, mother?" she exclaimed, her cheek paling for the moment with the intensity of her feeling. "Whom should I mean but Amelot?"

"Sir Amelot de Manhower!" replied the lady. "I had not thought of this. He should not have come. What shall we do to save him? There is a Yorkist force even now at Settle." Thus far she had spoken musingly, as if in thoughtful commune with herself; but now her eye brightened, and she inquired quickly, "But how can you know this? Where is Sir Amelot? Is he within the tower? Why came he not with his report to me, instead of forcing you into this peril?"

"No, dearest mother," replied the girl, eagerly; "my maiden, Marian, brought me the tidings up. She was down in the glen at sunset, ere the storm came on; and, seeing her, he crawled out from his hiding-place, and bade her bring you tidings that he

was hidden in the cavern under the first fall, and that no man could take him there, for that he only knows its secret. But he lacks food and wine, and the means of procuring light, which he prays you send him."

"And why brought she not the news to me? Why did she tarry so long on the way? She must have known this these five hours."

"She dared not leave the supper-board before my hour for untiring; and dared not seek your presence, with whom she has no duty to perform, lest she should so create suspicion."

"If that were but the reason!" said the lady, relapsing into thought. "But that boy, that page, Damian! I doubt her—I doubt her much, Eleanor. Why should she have told you? Does she know that you love him, Nell?"

"Mother!" exclaimed the agitated girl, with the conscious blood flushing crimson to her brow, her cheeks, her neck. "No one—no one knows that. I don't—I don't know, mother! What mean you, mother mine?" And she burst into a flood of tears, and sank into a chair, overpowered and exhausted by the mere force of her own feelings.

The lady walked up slowly to her fair child's side, and laying both her withered hands in attitude of benediction on that fair, sunny head—

"Be comforted, my own sweet child. Weep not; but little can you guess of what a mother knows or knows not, whose best child's happiness is staked. Eleanor, I have known, have seen all this a year and over."

"You have seen—have known all, mother!" cried she, starting to her feet, and gazing into her mother's eyes with nascent hope. "Then you do not—you do—I mean—not disapprove? You, ah! you pardon me?"

"If I had disapproved, I had interposed to prevent. For the rest, Eleanor, I trust—have I aught to pardon?"

"I *do* love him, mother."

"And he knows it?"

"He might hope, might perhaps fancy—but I—I——Oh, mother, you do not dream that I ever told him?"

"Nor he you, Eleanor?"

"Had he but whispered it without your sanction, then I had not loved him."

"Then you have loved, yourself unloved. Is it so, Eleanor?"

"Mother, no! Can you think it of me?" she exclaimed, indignantly, and again she crimsoned.

"You said he never whispered it," replied the lady, half suppressing a smile. "How then can you know it?"

"Never in words, mother; but his manner—his voice—his eyes. Oh, mother, do not! do not! You *must* know what I mean."

"Perfectly, dearest. His manner, his voice, and his eyes told you what he dreamed of, and yours replied as plainly. But now to the point; does Marian know, or suspect aught, think you, of these—these love passages?"

"I am certain—no, as certain as that I live."

"Send her to me at once. I mistrust her sorely. There have been passages, I know, between her and the page Damian; and he sought leave of me, as the curfew rang, to go down to the Abbot's forester. Send her to me at once; and bid Geoffrey, the warder, take arms, with two of his best men, and wait my call in the anteroom."

Eleanor, not unwilling to escape farther questioning, and to gain time to collect her senses, bounded from the hall; and, giving the lady's orders to the warder, hurried up to her turret chamber, and sent the girl down to her mother's presence. Then, falling on her knees by her own bedside, she thanked, from the depths of her guileless heart, the Giver of all good for the blessings he had that night granted her, and prayed, among fast flowing tear-drops, half of joy, half of sorrow, for protection to her loved Amelot.

The interview between the dreaded lady and the girl, Marian, was but brief; for, terrified already and self-conscious, she could no more endure the lady's piercing eye and calm, hard, cutting questions than the partridge can the talons and the beak of the keen goshawk. Within ten minutes from entering the hall, the lady's voice was heard, "Without there!" And, at the word, all steel from helm to shoe, with bill and bow and broadsword, the stout retainers entered.

They found the lady, impassive as her wont, writing upon a strip of parchment, and the girl prostrate at her feet, in an agony of tears and terror.

"Here, Jansen," said the lady, as she finished her writing, "bear me this scroll forthwith to the sub-prior of Bolton; and, hark you, put this wench upon a palfrey, and carry her down with you to the abbey. There leave her in keeping of the Father Janitor. That done, await the sub-prior's orders. Perform them, be they what they may, and that with all due diligence. Tush, wench!" she added; "tears are vain, and supplication. You should have thought of these things ere you thought to deal in treason. Lose no time, Jansen; honor and life depend upon your diligence and fealty."

The sturdy henchman bowed, and, leading the unhappy girl away, half carried in the arms of his followers—for, ignorant what fate awaited her, she was now all but fainting—he left the proud, impassive lady to her own melancholy meditations.

They were not long, however; for, lighting a taper from her lamp, she opened a private doorway at the farther end of the hall, and, ascending a narrow staircase to an upper story, soon stood, unseen and unsuspected, at the door of her daughter's chamber.

Already had that fair young being fallen into the light and happy sleep of innocence and peace; but

need was that she should be aroused; and long and anxious was the consultation that ensued on her awakening.

It had already struck the first hour past midnight, and the bells for prime were already pealing up the deep glen from Bolton's hoary towers, ere, with a heartfelt blessing, and a parting memento to be astir with the lark or before him, the mother left her child to dream of future bliss, alas! not unmixed with future peril.

Perhaps even then she had not left her, but that a hoarse resounding challenge from the gate tower warned her that probably her emissaries had returned; and, in truth, she had scarce retrimmed her lamp, and resumed her seat in the great hall, where of late she had held vigils oft till well nigh morning, before an esquire reverently entered to say that the warden craved a hearing of the lady.

The man had little to relate, however. The subprior, he said, had sent the bailiff for the forester, and had questioned him for some time in private, when, with the simple word that "it was too late!" he had dismissed them. The girl, Marian, he had heard, was committed to the penitentiary cell.

"You have done well, Jansen," answered the lady. "But you have more to do. Keep watch and ward yourself to-night, with half the garrison in arms; suffer no one to enter in or go out before noon to-morrow, saving the Lady Eleanor, who will go forth mounted at daybreak. If the page Damian show himself before the gates, bend your own trusty bow and send a clothyard arrow to his heart. For the rest, if any band of marauding Yorkists show themselves on our side the Wharfe, ring bancloche and fire beacon till all the country is aroused, and then upon them, and cry 'Egremont for Lancaster, and give no quarter!'"

The man bowed low, and was retiring silently, when a sign checked him.

"How goes the night, Jansen? and how promises the morrow?"

"The storm has rolled away to the east, lady; the moon is up. It will be fair morn the morrow."

She waved him his dismissal; and, within half an hour, except the warder at the gate-house, and the sentinels along the walls, there was not an eye open within the walls of Barden Tower.

Long ere the sun was up, however, a light foot glided down the castle stair; and the delicate and gentle Eleanor passed down into the castle hall, arrayed in plumed cap and riding skirt, with a short mantle over it, which, had its folds been disturbed, might have revealed things so incongruous to a young lady's morning ramble as a light basket girded round her slender waist on the one side, and counterbalanced by a stone flagon on the other.

No envious eye, however, fell upon her; no eye at all, indeed, save the trusty warden's, who, forewarned of her early coming forth, awaited her himself, with her palfrey saddled, at the castle gate, himself assisted her to the selle, and, opening a postern gate, let her forth, without a word of question. Only, as she rode out, he said, quietly—

"If there be need, remember, lady, this postern will be held in hand."

Bowing her head in answer, she gave her horse the rein, and cantered down into the deep and awful chasm through which the Wharfe was raging, between black walls of rock crusted with blacker forests, here tumbling, a hundred yards in width, over sheer ledges in white cataracts; here roaring, wider yet, over dread boiling rapids; and here, most hideous spot of all, pent in between the slippery ledges which its spray constantly o'erflowed, a broad and powerful torrent jammed into a pass of scarce ten feet in width, arrowy, louder than a surf-beat shore, unfathomable. "The Strid," that pass is called, in the tongue of the Northmen, because a man, if he have heart enough, may *stride* across it; "the Strid," a spot fatal to *her* race, who now galloped fearlessly along the slippery rocks beside it; for there the Boy of Egremont, the son of her who answered "Endless weeping," died miserably, nor was ever found again, pulled back by his reluctant greyhound, after his own fleet foot had crossed the chasm.

But not of that she thought; her heart was beating only with true love, and the high hope how she should save her lover. Two cataracts she had passed by, and then the perilous "Strid;" and now the farthest, the first fall, of the glen thundered down white before her, as the driven snow, a terrible stupendous cataract. The sun gleamed out just as she reached its foot; and as his first rays gilt the silver foam, a human form stepped out from beneath the arch of spray, and stood before her eyes, Sir Amelot de Manhower, as yet in safety.

An instant, and she was in his arms—another, and she had torn herself from that short embrace; and with all the eloquence of young permitted love, with all the volubility of a woman's fear for whom she loves the best, was pouring out her tidings, insisting on his silence, recounting her mother's kindness, impressing on him the wisdom of her mother's plans, enforcing her own sweet injunctions.

"There, there! Not a word more," she cried. "You have told me your secret of escape; now I have to speak only, and you only to obey, if you are either good knight or true lover. Marian, my wretched girl, has betrayed you to her lover Damian; and he set off last night for Settle, to bring the soldiers down upon you. It is by God's grace alone, which sent the storm last night, that they are not here already! Make your way then at once, like the mole underground, to Malham cove; lie hidden there till night; and, traveling by night only, hiding from dawn till twilight, make your way through the fells to Carlisle. Enter that city boldly, for we shall be there before you with six score of stout spears of Lancaster. The warden of the Marches is for us.